

1975

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VARIETY

AUDITORIUM-ARENA

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## NBC To Revive 'Peter Pan' Arena Version For Aussie-Asian Tour

"Peter Pan," the arena show which folded after a 1974 tour of the U.S., will be revived by NBC Entertainment Corp. for a jaunt through Australia as a joint venture with Michael Edgley International and Brian Treasure, joint managing director of TV Channel 7, Perth. The show is slated to open in December in Perth and will then move on to Hong Kong to be followed by other Asian cities. It will return in August to complete the tour throughout the rest of Australia.

The show will be recreated and produced by George Cahan, general manager of the NBC Entertainment Corp. Among the props to be carried by the layout will be its own portable sound system, portable floor, as well as a Jolly Roger ship large enough for 20.

Originally "Peter Pan's" operating expenses were too large to be absorbed in the domestic U.S. version. It required a huge crew of stagehands which made costs prohibitive. It's understood that the number of props will be scaled down, and a lighter floor will be used in the Aussie tour.

The Australasian sector is deemed profitable enough for these super tourers. The Walt Disney tourers, also done in cooperation with NBC, are still in that part of the world although they have long been off the boards in the U.S. It's possible that "Peter Pan" will also tour South America following its Australian and Asian jaunts.

### Greenville Aud Scores 'Best Ever' Yr. With Big \$1,424,454 In Revenue

Greenville, S.C., Sept. 2. Recently ended 1974-75 fiscal year was "the best ever" in Greenville Memorial Auditorium's 17-year history, executive director Leslie Timms revealed last week.

Despite the recession's ripoff in some entertainment areas, the auditorium boxoffice took in \$1,424,454 from some 651,530 customers, an increase of about 40,000 over the previous year's patronage. Gain at the till was \$223,609.

"Weekends are booked solid for the remainder of this year and we are already having to turn down shows because of previous commitments," Timms said. He added that the aud has booked four shows for the autumnal season: the musical "1776," Oct. 14-15; "Give 'em Hell, Harry," Oct. 16; Gene Kelly's "Salute To Broadway," Oct. 28; and "Stand Up and Cheer," Nov. 15.

### LOTS O'SEAS ACTS BOOKED FOR AUSSIE

Sydney, Sept. 2. Overseas artists who will add to the Sydney entertainment scene include the Electric Light Orchestra, which began an Australian tour yesterday (Mon.).

It will be followed by guitarist Jose Feliciano tomorrow (Wed.), then English clarinetist Acker Bilk, Sept. 10; Marlene Dietrich, Sept. 22; The Temptations, Sept. 23, and James Last, Sept. 27. Kamahl also returns from London for a brief tour of Queensland.

Three members of The Bay City Rollers are now making a much-ballyhooed short visit. The group's other two members were unable to come because of a court hearing in Britain, but an Australian tour is possible later in the year.

### CCE's Decree Scratches Oscar, The Racing Mouse

Ottawa, Sept. 2. When Central Canada Exhibition decided to ban the use of animals in games of chance, it put Oscar, the Racing Mouse out of work. Oscar — actually several mini-rodents who do 20-minute shifts — dashes around several holes in a round board, while players bet on which he'll dart into. He can do that everywhere but here, said Gary Sorrell, who runs the game for Amusements of America.

CCE ban was prompted by protests when it was found that some mice had been killed in seemingly unavoidable handling accidents. A pingpong ball replaced Oscar here, but doesn't draw the same interest, Sorrell noted.

### Fans Storm Gates, Fight With Troopers At N.Y. Rock Bash

Syracuse, Sept. 2.

New York state troopers clashed with hundreds of gate crashers at the entrance to a rock concert on the State Fairgrounds today (Tues.) with a reported 30 or 40 persons injured in the melee. The Great American Music Fair, held a day after the closing of the state fair, featured Jefferson Starship, the Doobie Bros., the Beach Boys, New Riders of the Purple Sage, America and the Stanky Brown Group.

Police claimed some 100 young people in a crowd of up to 2,000 congregated near the gates, tried to uproot a fence and force their way into the fest, being held around a half mile away. Security guards called in the troopers, who arrived some 75 strong, rushing the crowd with nightsticks and teargas.

Some of the youngsters, held out

because they had not purchased tickets, which went for \$11 in advance and \$15 at the gate, then hurled rocks, bottles and other things at the police. Troopers were reinforced by Syracuse city police and restored order by midafternoon, arresting a reported 60 persons.

Despite the clash, whose most serious injuries reportedly were a broken elbow and broken toes suffered by the lawmen, the nine-hour concert continued without interruption.

### ATTENDANCE UP AT TWO DISNEY PARKS

Attendance at both the Walt Disney World, Orlando, Fla., and Disneyland, Anaheim, Calif., increased during the 1974-75 season. From the period of Oct. 1, 1974 to Sept. 1, number of admissions clocked at the Orlando installation was up by 16.1% while Disneyland admissions were hiked by 4.4% over the previous year. Figures include Labor Day admissions.

Walt Disney Productions, parent firm of both parks, stated that

attendance in July and August was 6.3% ahead of the comparable period of the previous year at Disney World, while Disneyland increase for that period was 5%.

The regular Walt Disney Productions third quarterly dividend will be paid Nov. 5 to shareholders of record Oct. 6.

Sonny Bono going to the Royal York Hotel, Toronto, Nov. 3.

### Drop Option For 2d Year Of 7-Seas Park

Arlington, Tex., Sept. 2.

Leisure Marine Corp. together with the American Broadcasting Co. have announced that they will not exercise their option for renewal of a lease to operate Seven Seas Amusement Park here.

ABC and LMC had formed a joint venture to operate the park for the 1975 season, which ended with Labor Day.

### Vegas Convention Biz Up In-Switch To Hard Sell Plugs

Las Vegas, Sept. 2.

Las Vegas convention biz is going up and future LV Convention & Visitors Authority ad promos will be spreading out as convention revenues reached \$55,426,380 during first seven months of 1975. The LVCVA ad budget has \$1,800,000 to shift from soft to hard sell.

Robert Schmuck, LVCVA convention bureau director, said there were 233 conventions and 204,173 in attendance in seven months. Upcoming are 254 conventions with an expected attendance of 347,186 and a revenue of almost \$39,000,000.

Although July is usually a slim month for conventions, this year was up over last year with 10 conventions, 12,600 attendees and revenue in excess of \$3,400,000 above '74's 11 conventions with only 7,000 and \$1,300,000 revenue.

The 1975-76 ad program unveiled by Kelly & Reber with Rod Reber pitching, stressed outdoor magazine spreads and radio spots. Largest chunk of the \$1,800,000 will go for outdoor, with billboards in Chicago and New York costing more than \$270,000.

Radio buys amount to \$139,200 in Houston, Dallas and Vancouver, B.C., and trade and consumer mags, convention presentations, brochures, special promos taking up the rest of the budget. In the latter category, the agency has developed a community-civic presentation.

### Taxpayers Assn.'s Bid For A Referendum On Greenwood Aud Fails

Greenwood, S.C., Sept. 2. Greenwood County Taxpayers Assn.'s attempt to throw the county's \$800,000 share of the proposed Greenwood Civic Center-Auditorium project funding into a pre-bond issue referendum apparently has failed.

A petition seeking the referendum, and limited to city voters, carried less than the required 10% of the municipality's qualified electors, City Managers Travis Higginbotham recently reported. Only 1,02 signed. Petition's re-circulation is considered doubtful.

Taxpayers Assn. referendum move was accompanied by organization president Joe Giles' statement that his members had taken no stand for or against the auditorium but wanted a referendum held first.

Referendum move's flop further greenlighted plans for the project, with city and county officials expected to begin finalizing soon. The \$1,600,000 construction cost is split three ways: U.S. Economic Development Administration, \$800,000, okayed and waiting; Greenwood County, \$400,000, also reported ready, and City of Greenwood's \$400,000 share, temporarily tied up by the referendum issue and now presumably freed.

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## ABC Scenic Attractions Studies '76 Outlook After Spotty Season

After an up and down summer in

its owned and operated parks and another operated on a lease basis, ABC Scenic & Wildlife Attractions, part of ABC Leisure Group 2, is taking a look at prospects for next season, even though many of the attractions will be staying open on at least a limited basis all year.

John Campbell, who has headed the division for three years, said in New York last week that each attraction has its specific pluses and minuses and was affected in different ways by the current travel situation, which finds more people staying closer to home and traveling by car, as well as by competition in the area.

At The Historic Towne of Smithville (N.J.), for example, a 25-year-old attraction near Atlantic City operated for the first time this season by ABC, a 2,440-seat theatre-in-the-round was added and programmed to see what would work.

"We had all types of programs," Campbell said, "and found out that what worked best was big names, like Joel Grey & Barbara Eden, and book musicals, including 'Fiddler on the Roof,' with Zero Mostel, and 'The Odd Couple,' with Tony Randall and Jack Klugman." Production was turned over to Don Branken's Wide World of Events, which handled booking, but Campbell said there has been no decision on who or what will be involved in the theatre's future.

### Winners & Losers

With houses scaled from \$5.50 to \$8.50, some shows drew better than \$100,000 for an eight-performance week and there were winners and losers all summer. Country & western music and standup comedians didn't do well at all. "Straight family entertainment proved to be the best," Campbell said, pointing out that it's important for shows to help the entire complex. "Jesus Christ, Superstar," for example, was an okay draw, but did no restaurant business.

He said the park, which has an admission tab of \$2.50, was breaking even, but that the company "learned a lot. It's a museum-type village, and there has not been enough activity to entertain the masses. We plan to bring it alive, show crafts people at work, for example." Toward that end, the division recently hired Bob Welch, who had pioneered selling of crafts projects as entertainment at Silver Dollar City in the Ozarks. Welch will work with all the division's attractions.

Smithville will also add a country fair and permanent and special festivals, all in the 1750-1830 mood. The Smithville Inn, which is now at 11 units, will be expanded to around 100 rooms, with meeting facilities. It already has its own airstrip. The park will remain open daily until the end of September, then operate weekends through Memorial Day. Thus far the draw has been 60% tourist, the remainder local residents.

### Two O&O's In Fla.

Two of the other four o&os are in Florida, Silver Springs and Weeki Wachee Spring. Silver Springs, on I-75, main road from the midwest into Florida, was started in the 1800s and has been under the ABC banner for 14 years, 4,500 acres in their natural state.

"Florida tourism has been oriented to Walt Disney World (near Orlando) in the five years or since they opened," Campbell said. "There was a Disney axis which ran across the state from Jacksonville. Weeki Wachee did

well before the gas crisis, 1973 was our best year. In 1974 gas stations started closing Sundays and people were afraid to travel, not only us but all Florida took a beating.

"In late 1974 and 1975, once the gas situation stabilized, we had a great Christmas. This summer it's no longer merely the Disney axis, it's the Disney complex which benefits those parks and attractions nearby. Silver Springs is close to its peak figures while Disney is breaking records. Weeki Wachee, which caters to an older group, is doing better, but not hitting the 1973 figure. You almost have to be north of Disney and near I-75." As noted, south Florida is having a dismal season.

ABC also purchased Wildlife Preserve in Largo, Md., from Ross Perot, who had called it Wild World of Animals. The park was hampered its first season by the opening of two new rival attractions, Taft's King's Dominion and Busch's Old Country, both in Virginia and drawing from the Baltimore-Washington megalopolis. Hershey Park, in Penna., also increased its ad budget in Baltimore and became a competitor.

"We're doing a complete market study to determine what people really want," Campbell said. "We have lists of who went to all the parks and we're modifying our operation to make it viable." Plans call for adding entertainment at the preserve and perhaps changing the name.

### Big Jim Wilson Tackles Atlanta's Omni, Others In \$3 1/2-Mil 'Wrestling' Suit

Atlanta, Sept. 2. State Rep. Hosea Williams, Fulton (Atlanta) County Commissioner J.O. Wyatt, the Omni and promoter Quinton Perry are being sued for \$3,500,000 in Fulton County Superior Court by James M. (Big Jim) Wilson, a former Atlanta Falcons football player and now a professional wrestler.

Wilson accuses the four in the court action of defrauding him and other wrestlers out of proceeds of a wrestling match at the 17,000-seat Omni in October, 1974.

Wilson said he joined with the three men named in the suit in forming the International Wrestling League, with Wyatt as the attorney and Perry as the promoter. The league was never incorporated although Wyatt was paid for the service, Wilson claims, and the Omni ended up bilking Wilson through "deceits, misrepresentations and frauds."

Wilson charges that the Omni submitted false cost statements after the match. Other wrestlers were "cheated and prostituted" in the deal, he contends, so they falsely accused Wilson of taking the money.

### Talk Of Town Lineup

London, Sept. 2. Talent lineup for the fall semester at the Talk of the Town, London's flagship nitery, includes a firsttime stand for domestic jazz chirp Cleo Laine and composer-conductor husband Johnny Dankworth. Couple is set for three weeks opening Oct. 6.

Lineup kicked off next Monday (1) with British singer Vince Hill, followed on Sept. 22 by the Platters. It's also the group's initial date there, a two-weeker.